1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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TYPICAL SERI HOUSE ON THE FRONTIER

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT—PL. II

BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY

[FACING P. 117]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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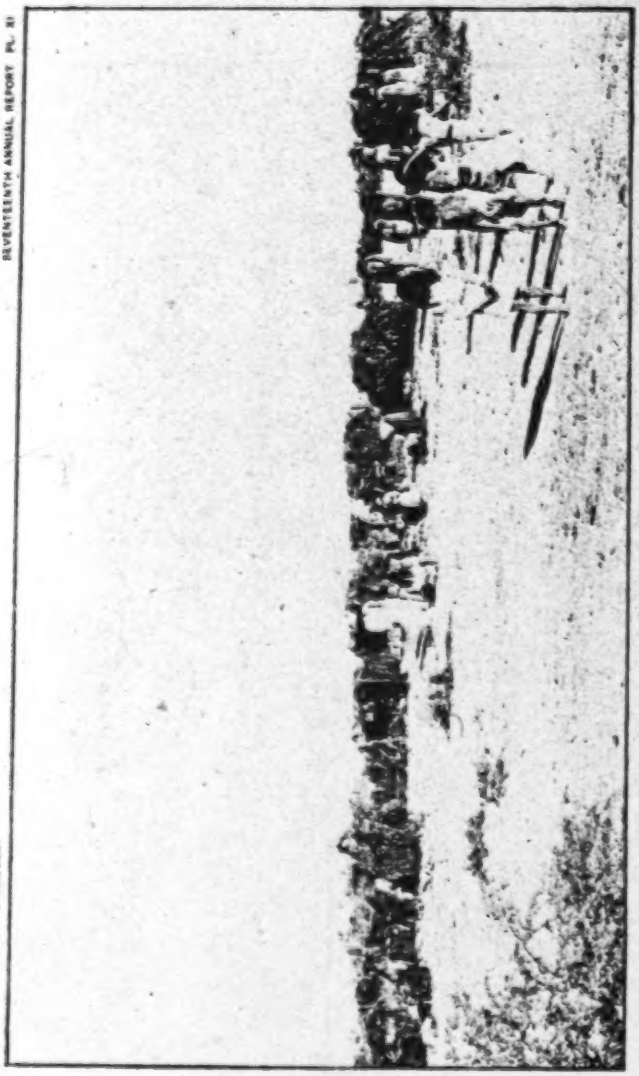

OCCUPIED RANCHERIA ON THE FRONTIER

[FACING p. 119]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT PL. XII

GROUP OF SERI INDIANS ON TRADING EXCURSION

[FACING p. 121]

1894-1895/1898 NU31 Seri NU31

GROUP OF SERI INDIANS ON THE FRONTIER

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SERI FAMILY GROUP

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT PL. XIV

BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY

[FACING P. 139]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SERI MOTHER AND CHILD

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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GROUP OF SERI BOYS

[p. 144 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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MASHEM, SERI INTERPRETER

[p. 146 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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TYPICAL SERI WARRIOR

(p. 154 A)

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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TYPICAL SERI MATRON

[p. 156 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SERI RUNNER

(p. 158 A)

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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YOUTHFUL SERI WARRIOR

[p. 162 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SERI MAIDEN

(p. 166 A)

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

The second mutilation was the only corporeal modification noted by early missionaries and explorers—it was the perforation of the nasal septum for the insertion of a skewer, perhaps of polished stone (though doubtless more commonly of bone), to which swinging objects were attached. One of the most useful records is that of the Jesuit, Padre Joseph Och, who described the nasal attachment as a small, colored stone suspended by cords from the perforated septum, and guarded with such jealous veneration that "one must give them at least a horse or a cow for one" (ante, p. 78); while according to Hardy's record, the nasal fetish is "a small, round, white bone, 5 inches in length, tapering off at both ends, and rigged something like a cross-jack yard."[1]

FIG. 7.—Snake-skin belt.

The custom is apparently obsolete, and nothing is known directly of details or motives.

Excepting these mutilations the corporeal decoration of the Seri is apparently limited to the face-painting: among the 60 individuals at Costa Rica in 1894 there was no trace of tattooing or scarification of face, limbs, or body; there were no labrets or earrings, and neither lips nor ears were pierced, nor were nasal septa observed to be perforated in accordance with the reputed ancient custom; the teeth were neither filed nor drilled; no indications of amputation or other maiming (save the removal of the incisors) were observed—indeed, the instinct for physical markings of symbolic or decorative character, which seems to be normal to primitive men, was apparently satisfied by the prevalent and persistent face-painting among the females.

The extra-corporeal decorative devices are of a meagerness and pov-

[1] Travels, p. 266.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

291 erty even transcending the poor apparel, flimsy habitations, and generally ill-developed artifacts of the lowly tribe.

[237] The most prominent personal possession is the pelican-skin robe; it is usually made of six skins, slightly dressed and in full plumage, sewed together with sinew in a conventional pattern of such sort as to give the greatest possible expanse consistent with the irregular outlines of the individual skins, and at the same time to display a conventional color pattern on the feathered side, the colors ranging from the dorsal slate to the ventral white of the fowl (as indicated in plate XXIII); sometimes there are only four skins and rarely there are eight, but the conventional arrangement is maintained. Before the beginning of a

[301] [824]

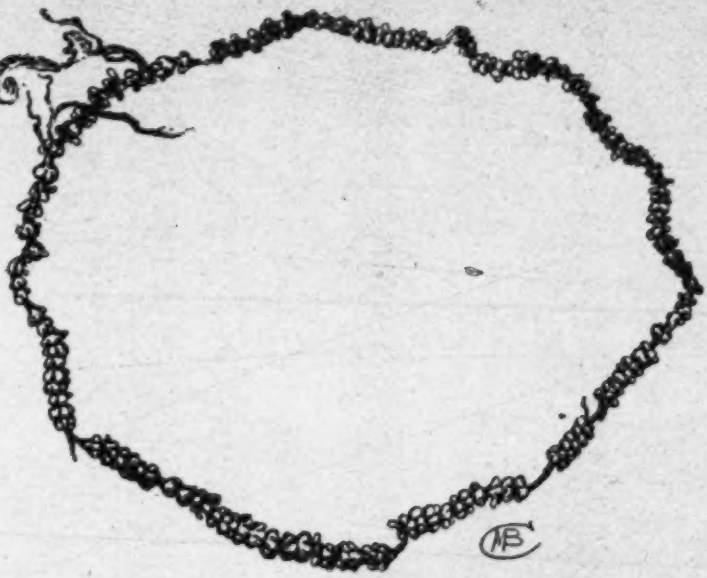

FIG. 8.—Dried flower necklace.

[177] fairly regular barter at Rancho de Costa Rica, and hence before the introduction of manta and other stuffs, the pelican-skin robes were supplemented by kilts made of mesquite root or other fibers, spun and twisted [286] in the fingers and woven probably on some primitive device no longer in use; but so far as is known these native fabrics were devoid of decorative patterns in color or weave. Less habitually a short wammus or shirt, with long sleeves, made of a material similar to that of the kilt, was worn; but it, too, was without ornamentation, so far as can be ascertained. The remaining article of utilitarian apparel is the belt, usually consisting of a strip of skin (of deer, rabbit, peccary, etc), slightly dressed with the hair on; frequently this is replaced by a cord or braided band of human hair, while the favorite belt of some of the

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

young warriors is a snake skin (such as that illustrated in figure 7); but so far as was seen the belts are not extended into tassels, decorative appendages, or even flowing ends.

The presumptively decorative costumery observed is limited to necklaces, usually of strung seeds, shells, and beads of wood or bone (figures 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13), though animal appendages, such as hoofs, teeth, etc, are sometimes worn. The most highly prized necklace found at Costa Rica was a human-hair cord with nine crotalus rattles attached (figure 14), worn by a young warrior of the Rattlesnake (?) clan. Not the slightest indication of headdresses was seen (though deer and lion masks are said by Hardy to have been worn on occasions); there were no bracelets, leg-bands, or rings of any description, and the cheap jewelry given to many of the women and youths at Costa Rica was either strung about the neck or concealed; while it is significant that even the showiest jewelry was less appreciated than bits of manta or lumps of sugar. When it is remembered that the Seri have been in occasional contact with Caucasians for over three and a half centuries, the fact that not a single glass bead was found among them becomes significant; and the significance of the simple fact is increased by the virtual absence of that persistent desire and protean use for beads—or beadsense—so prominent among most primitive tribes.

Fig. 9—Seed necklace.

Fig. 10—Nut pendants.

Fig. 11—Shell beads.

Fig. 12—Wooden beads.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

Naturally the conditions at Costa Rica were unfavorable to the study of native ideas concerning apparel. The women and some of the children were arrayed chiefly in cast-off habiliments of the rancheras or in nondescript rags, while the men either aped Mexican fashions, like Mashém, or shamefacedly sweltered under the unaccustomed burden of tatterdemalion gear; yet there was a meaningful absence of that desire for finery so prominent among primitive peoples—a fact quite as eloquent in itself as the absence of bracelets and bangles, tassels and trappings. It is probable that the shamans and mystery-hedged crones in the depths of Seriland enhance their influence by the aid of symbolic paraphernalia (indeed, some inkling of such customs is found in the meager records of earlier visitors);[1] yet the conspicuous feature of Seri costumery is the dearth of decorative devices.

FIG. 13.—Necklace of wooden beads.

The habitations of the tribe are the simplest of jacales—mere bowers, affording partial protection from sun and wind, but not designed to shed rain or bar cold. Half a dozen of these were examined at Costa Rica in 1894 and probably a hundred more, in various stages of habitability, in Seriland proper in 1895, yet not the slightest trace of decoration was observed—the structures are plainly and barrenly utilitarian in every feature. The same may be said of the balsas in which the Seri navigate their stormy waters; for the peculiarly graceful curves of the craft evidently stand for nothing more than the mechanical solution of a complex problem in balanced forces, wrought out through the experience of generations, while the simple reed bundles are absolutely devoid of paint, of superfluous cord, of fetishistic appendages or markings, of tritons, nereids, or other votive symbols at bow or stern, and of industrially superfluous features or attachments in general—indeed, the only appendages discovered were one or two simple wooden marlinspikes (shown in figure 26), thrust among the reeds to be at hand in case of need for repairs.

Among the utensils employed in the primitive householdry of the Seri the most conspicuous and at the same time the most essential is the olla, or water-jar. Its technical features are described elsewhere; but it may here be noted that the olla is the central artifact about which the very

[1] Hardy noted the use of "a small leathern bag, painted and otherwise ornamented", as a medicine rattle (Travels, p. 262), and also described a wind-symbol and an effigy used for thaumaturgic purposes (Ibid., pp. 284, 285).

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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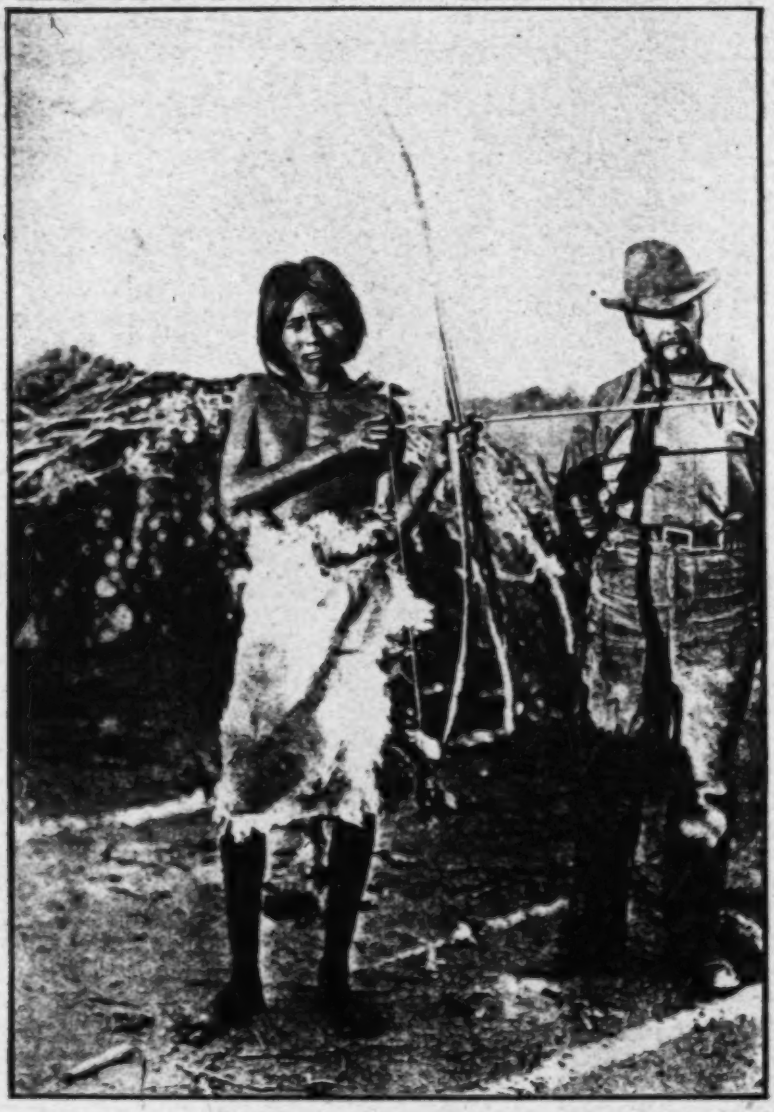

SERI ARCHER AT REST

[p. 200 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

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SERI ARCHER AT ATTENTION

[p. 202 A]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

strong wrench on the horns or stunned with a blow of war-club or hupf, as conditions may demand. Straggling swine and wandering dogs are occasionally ambushed or stalked and transfixed with arrows, torn hurriedly into fragments, or shouldered and carried off struggling, as exigency may require; while sheep and goats are practically barred from the entire Seri frontier because of their utter helplessness in the face of so hardy huntsmen.

The quantity of stock consumed by the Seri varies greatly with the policy of rancheros and vaqueros. At different times during the last two and a half centuries it has been estimated that the chief portion of the subsistence of the tribe was derived from stolen stock, and it is probable that during the early period of the Encinas régime this

FIG. 23—Desiccated pork.

estimate was fair; but under the Draconian rule of a Seri head for each head of slaughtered stock, the consumption is reduced to a few dozen head annually, including superannuated, crippled, and diseased animals unable to keep up with the herds, those bogged in Playa Noriega and other basins during freshets, the stallions and bulls slain in strife for leadership of their bands, and the festering or semimummied carcasses gladly turned over by idle rancheros on the chance visits of Seri bands to the frontier (such as the specimen in the protograph reproduced in figure 23).

No special devices have been developed in connection with the chase for stock, nor has material progress been made in acquiring Caucasian devices. There are, indeed, indications of a disposition to nse

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

ary sense-effects (as when the sense of smell is intensified by exercise of the organs of taste), or, in another direction, by the habit of the youthful penman who shapes his letters by aid of lingual and facial contortion; yet it is a characteristic of primitive life—one doubtless due to the interrelations of psycho-physical functions—to not only employ but to greatly exalt vocal formulas associated with manual activities, so that words, and eventually *the* Word, acquires a mystical or talismanic or sacred significance pervading all lower culture—indeed the savage shaman is unable to work his marvels without mumbled incantations ending in some formulated and well-understood utterance, and his practice persists in the meaningless mummery and culminating "presto" of modern jugglery. So, viewed in the light of psycho-physical causes and prevalent customs connected with vocal formulas, it would seem probable that the conventional features of the Seri jacales are crystallized in the tribal lore quite as effectually through the associated work-chants as through direct memory of the forms and structures themselves. And the simple runes chanted in unison by Seri matrons engaged in bending and lashing their okatilla house-bows apparently define a nascent stage in the development of the elaborate fiducial house-building ceremonies characteristic of various higher tribes; for the spontaneous vocal accompaniment tends naturally to run into ritual under that law of the development of myth or fable which explains so many of the customs and notions of primitive peoples.[1]

APPARELING

Slightly as they have been affected by three centuries of sporadic contact with higher culture, the Seri reveal many marks of acculturation; and the most conspicuous of these are connected with clothing, especially on the frontier, where women and even warriors habitually wear a livery of subserviency in the form of cast-off Caucasian rags (as illustrated in most of the photographs taken at Costa Rica). Even in the depths of Seriland the native fabrics are largely replaced by white men's stuffs, obtained by barter, beggary, and robbery; yet it is easy to distinguish the harlequin veneer of borrowed trappings from the few fixed types of covering that seem characteristic.

The most distinctive piece of apparel is a kilt, extending from waist to knees, worn alike by men and women and the larger children. Aboriginally it was either a birdskin robe or a rectangle of coarse textile fabric, secured at the waist by a hair-cord belt; acculturally it is usually a rectangle of manta (course sheeting) or other stuff, preferably cotton or linen but sometimes woolen, fastened either by tucking in the corners or by a belt of cord. Good specimens of the acultural cloth kilt worn by men and larger boys are illustrated in plates XVI

[1] The law of fable in its relation to primitive surgery is formulated in the Sixteenth Ann. Rep. Bur. Am. Eth., 1897, p. 22.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

and XIX; the birdskin kilt (put on for the purpose) is illustrated in plate XVIII, while the aboriginal fabric is fairly represented in plate XXIX. Although ordinarily worn as a kilt, the same article (temporarily replaced by an improvised substitute) serves other purposes at the convenience of the wearer; in the chase for tunas and for moving game it becomes a bag or pack-sheet; in case of cold rain it is shifted to the shoulders or the exposed side; during the siesta it is elevated on an shrub and a stick to serve as a canopy; at sleeping time generally it forms (especially when of birdskin) a bed, i. e., a combined mattress and coverlet; and in attack or defense the pelican skin is at once standard, buckler, and waving cape to confuse quarry or enemy after the manner of the toreador's cloak. 291 [177] [182] [513]

An almost equally distinctive garment is a short shirt or wammus, with long sleeves, worn by men and women but not by children; ordinarily it covers the thorax, missing connection with the kilt by a few inches, and so affording ventilation and space for suckling the teeming offspring. Unlike the kilt, it is an actual garment, fitted with sleeves and fastened in front with hair-cord strings. Although the Seri wammus corresponds fairly with a Yaqui garment, it seems practically certain that it is of local aboriginal design, and that it was made primitively of haircloth or native textiles (as illustrated in plate XXIX) and worn rather ceremoniously; but latterly it is made of manta and is worn habitually (at least by the women and on the frontier), though cast aside in preparation for any special task or effort—i. e., it is not connected with pudency-sense, save to a slight degree in the younger women. The form, function, and prevalence of the wammus are illustrated by the group shown in plate XIII, in which nearly all of the thirty-odd adults wear the garment. [171] [177]

These two articles constitute the ordinary wearing apparel of the Seri, though they are commonly supplemented (especially when both are of manta) by a pelican-skin robe, which is habitually carried to serve as bed or mackintosh, according to the chance of journey and weather, or as a shield in sudden warfare. No head-covering is used, save in the ceremonial masquerade, when the heads of animals are worn as masks,[1] or in aping Caucasian customs, especially on expeditions for barter (as illustrated in plate XII). Loose trousers of Mexican pattern are sometimes put on at frontier points, but are discarded in Seriland proper, save by Mashém, who maintains prestige partly by this borrowed badge of Caucasian superiority. Leggings and moccasins are eschewed, naturally enough, since they would afford little protection from the sharp spalls and savage thorns of the district, and would give lodgment for the barbed spines inevitably gathered in rapid chase or flight over cactus-dotted stretches; and the only foot-covering seen (save Mashém's boots) was a single sandal made from the rough skin of a turtle-flipper, apparently for ceremonial rather than practical use. [177]

[1] Hardy (Travels, p. 396) describes the ceremonial wearing of the heads of deer with horns attached.

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

291 [177] Of all the party at Costa Rica in 1894 subchief Mashém was the only one who wore Caucasian apparel with any air of comfort and fitness; yet even he, with hat and shirt, boots and breeches, and loose bandana about his neck in cowboy style (plate XVII), did not feel fully dressed without the slender hair-cord necklace of his kin in its wonted place. On the frontier improvised fig-leaves were sometimes put on the children of less than a dozen years (as illustrated by the standing infant shown in plate XIV, who was thus dressed hastily for her picture); and a common garb of the smaller children at Costa Rica, as they played about the rancheria or wandered in directions away from the white

[412] [854]

FIG. 29—Seri hairbrush.

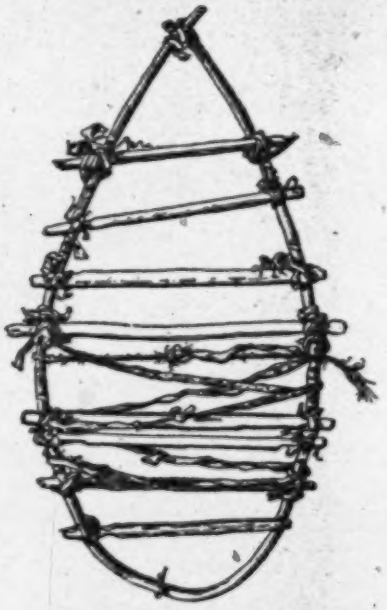

FIG. 30—Seri cradle.

man's rancho, was limited to a cincture of hair cord or snake skin, or perhaps of agave fiber, under which an improvised kilt might be tucked on the Caucasian's approach.

281 513 In addition to the individual apparel, each clan, or at least the elder woman or her fraternal executive, accumulates some surplus material as opportunity offers, and this serves as family bedding until occasion arises for converting it to other uses. Of late the prevailing materials are pelican skins, lightly dressed and joined into robes by sinew stitching; deerskins, dried or partially dressed; cormorant skins, treated like those of the pelican; seal skins, usually fragmentary; peccary skins,

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Ser

Summarily, the customary apparel of Seri men and women may be regarded as limited to three articles—(1) a kilt, normally of coarse textile fabric, which is made a prime necessity by a well-developed pudency; (2) a short wammus, also normally of coarse textile fabric, which is apparently regarded as a convenience and luxury rather than a necessity; and (3) a robe, normally of pelican skin, sometimes substituted for either or both of the other articles, but ordinarily used as bedding or as a buckler. The most valued of these articles is the robe, which in the absence of the others replaces the kilt; yet pudency demands the habitual use of some form of kilt, while both wammus and robe are held so far superfluous that they may be laid aside or bartered or otherwise dispensed with whenever occasion arises. 291

On considering the special functions and probable genesis of the Seri appareling, the student is impressed by the absence of the breech-clout, except perhaps in temporary improvisations—though the absence of this widespread article of primitive costumery need awaken little surprise in view of the environment, and especially of the abounding barbs of Seriland, which render all appareling of doubtful value save for the protection of tissues softened by habitual covering. The prevailing thornliness of the habitat renders the free-flowing and easily removable apron the most serviceable protection for the exposed vitals of the pubic region; and this device, a common one in thorny habitats generally, grades naturally into the short skirt or kilt; while it would well accord with the maritime habit and habitual thought of the Seri to apply the tough and densely feathered skin of the pelican to the purpose. This suggestion as to the nascent covering of the tribe consists with the tribal faith, in which the Ancient of Pelicans ranks as the creative deity, while its modern representative is esteemed a protective tutelary possessing talismanic powers against cold, wet, bestial claw and fang, alien arrows, and all other evils; so that the use of this feathered pelt as a shield against spiny shrubbery, sharp-leaved sedges, and barb-thorned cacti is quite in harmony with Seri philosophy. Accordingly it seems clear that the pelican-skin kilt was autochthonous among the Seri, and that it was the original form of tribal appareling; and it is of no small significance that the type persists in actual use as well as in suggestive vestigial forms, such as pelican-down swaddling for infants, pelican-feather plumes on cradle nets, etc. 182 291 [776] [1741]

The passage from the pelican-skin kilt to the garment of textile fabric under the slow processes of primitive thought may not be traced confidently, though a strong suggestion arises in the Seri hair-cult (a Samoanan faith not without parallel in far higher culture) under which mystical powers and talismanic virtues are imputed to the human pelage. It is in connection with this cult that the Seri locks are so attentively cultivated and so assiduously preserved and consecrated to more intimate personal uses in belts, necklaces, and the like; and although the connecting links have not been found, it is thoroughly 174 291 826

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

174 In accord with Seri thought to assume that in earlier times the hair necklaces were expanded into rudimentary apparel in connection with
291 pelican-skin shields, and after the conquest of vegetal fibers into more
826 finished garments probably woven partly of hair and worn in such wise as to supplement the natural pelage in the protection of back, shoulders, chest, and arms. If the indication of the tribal cult be valid, it would appear that the wammus was the second piece of apparel in order of genesis, though the first to be made of artificial fabric; and it is noteworthy that the suggestion is supported by the form of the short and free-flowing garment underlying the flowing tresses of warriors and matrons, as well as the vestigial use of human-hair cords for neckbands and fastening strings; while its antiquity in comparison with the textile kilt is indicated by the fact that it is a finished artifact, evidently fitted to its functions by generations of adjustment.

The step from the making of the wammus to the substitution of artificial fabrics for the pelican-skin kilt was an easy and natural one; and it need only be noted that the transition is still incomplete, since the feathered pelt is unquestioningly substituted for the fabric whenever occasion demands, yet that the kilt in some form must be much more archaic than the wammus, since it is correlated with the pudency sense,[1] while the complete garment is not so correlated save in slight and incipient degree.

Accordingly the three articles of apparel may be seriated genetically as (1) the pelican-skin robe, used long as a kilt, and only lately relegated to emergency use and bedding; (2) the well-differentiated wammus of textile fabric with hair-cord fastenings; and (3) the textile kilt, with or without a hair-cord belt. And the three artifacts are local and presumptively—indeed manifestly—autochthonous, and exemplify the interdependence of artifacts and environment no less strikingly than the Seri balsa or basket or jacal.

TOOLS AND THEIR USES

000 In advanced culture tools are finished products, made and used in accordance with preconceived designs or established arts for the production of commodities; in primal life (as well exemplified by Seri handicraft) tools are mere by-products incidental to the largely instinctive activities directed toward the maintenance of life. Accordingly, the tools of advanced culture form the nucleus of industries, while the designless tools of the prime cluster about the outskirts of industrial

[1] In this writing the conclusion reached in an unpublished discussion of the beginning of clothing is assumed—i. e., that the primal apparel was purely protective, and that the habitual concealment of portions of the body incidental to its wearing gradually planted the pudency sense. The germ of clothing, without attendant pudency, is well illustrated in Karl von den Steinen's observations and discussions of the Brazilian natives (Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens, Berlin, 1894, pp. 150-159). It is noteworthy that the Seri, more primitive as they are in so many respects than any other American aborigines known, are much farther advanced than the Brazilian natives in apparelling and its effects on character. The contrariation and the differences are alike interesting; yet in both cases the costumes reflect environmental conditions and needs with remarkable fidelity.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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342 middle. Two imperfect wind-breaks of brush, less than a quarter of a circumference in curvature, stood near the camp..

On the subject of textiles and textile clothing (pp. 171, 225-232), 114 McGee is necessarily vague on account of lack of specimens. He 281 says that native kilts, from waist to knee, were either of birdskin or "a rectangle of coarse textile fabric," "woven probably on some prim- 286 itive device"; that it is practically certain that a long-sleeved, short- 291 bodied shirt or wammus is "of local aboriginal design" and was "made primitively of haircloth or native textiles"; that the probable genetic series of Seri garments was: 1, the pelican-skin robe used as a kilt, 2, the textile shirt, 3, the textile kilt; and that Seri fabrics, according to a Mexican informant, "resemble coarse bagging, and are woven or netted quite plainly."

Human hair cord could be netted, or twined in double weft into 114 basket-like bags or mats; it could hardly be woven into cloth without 171 a loom. The same holds of *ixtle*, agave fiber. Bast of willow, cotton- 286 wood, beanstalk, such as was spun and twined, and perhaps woven on a limited scale, by the Colorado river Yuman tribes, was not available to the Seri, though they may have had nearly equally soft substitutes, even in their desert. Cotton they did not have. *Ixtle* is a strong, harsh fiber, excellent for cordage, nets, open-mesh bags, and the like, and still largely used in Mexico for such purposes. It would also serve well for fringe-aprons, for which the Lower Californians used it. A fabric from it would be rough and stiff, giving little warmth, not very satisfactory for a kilt, and quite unserviceable for a fitted garment like a sleeved shirt. Cotton was the prevailing garment material found along the coast by the first Spaniards, north up to the Cahita (Ka'ita, namely Tehueco, Mayo, Yaqui); here *ixtle* became more prevalent though cotton persisted; but the type of garment is not clear.

As to looms, *ixtle* is today woven into carrying bags on a heddled belt-loom by the Nahua-speaking Indians of Sinaloa. The Mayo weave woolen girdles on a similar loom. They also weave woolen blankets on a demountable horizontal loom, the warp passing continuously around the two heavy yarn beams. It is not clear whether this is a hybrid Spanish or a purely native apparatus. The Opata and Pima Bajo loom is not known. The American Pima weave cotton both on a belt-loom and on a staked horizontal loom, but with warps in a single plane.[4] It is difficult to imagine these looms existing among the Seri, except the first mentioned; and this would not yield them much in the way of garments. There is no reason why they 114 should have worn more than the Lower Californian women's fringe- 291 aprons, supplemented perhaps by birdskin blankets and loin covers. 439 They no doubt secured occasional garments from neighboring tribes, as they gladly but irregularly wear those of whites today; and this

[4] Russell, BAE-R, 26:142-153, 1908.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

is what their "shirt" (McGee, pl. 29) probably was. The fabrics of McGee's Mexican informant may refer to gunny-sacks made over into improvised imitations of civilized garments; or to single-element carrying bags. It is entirely possible that contact with the cloth-weaving tribes of Sonora long ago induced the Seri to shrink from habitual complete nudity; but it is difficult to imagine them producing even a coarse wearable cloth. McGee's interpretation of the historic sequence of Seri garments is of course wholly speculative.

The cradle shown by McGee (p. 226, fig. 30) consists of a kite-shaped hoop with eight sticks tied across it and a lashing thong passed back and forth across it half-a-dozen times. Even allowing for some slip of the parts in transport to Washington, this specimen is quite typical in Seri disregard of evenness, neatness, order, or finish. The Yaqui cradle illustrated by Hrdlička[7] consists of eight or nine lengthwise sticks or canes twined close together. The Lower Californians used a basket or a turtleshell. The Gila Pima and river Yuman cradle is of "ladder" type, and therefore similar in structure to the Seri except that it lacks the point at the bottom and has the sides parallel; it also carries a hood of wickered or twilled splints. As regards basic structure, one form of Maidu cradle is most similar to the Seri; just as the plan of the Yaqui one reappears among Miwok, Yokuts, and Mono a little further south in California.[8] It appears from this irregular distribution that so simple an apparatus as the open or flat baby-carrier, which can be just as serviceable without a definite technique or style entering into it, is likely to vary locally without much significance, and that its forms will indicate historic connection only when they are parallel in a number of details. In these respects it resembles house types. In both these objects, new "inventions," certainly of detail elements and perhaps of basic structure, seem to be readily made and adopted.

McGee's finding (p. 247) that the Seri are "not habitual stone arrow-makers" has a parallel among the river Yumans, and, at least partially, among the remaining Sonoran tribes. His conclusion (p. 259) that the *yerba de la flecha* (magot, Sebastiano bilocularis?) was an Opata but probably not a Seri arrow poison, seems sound. The plant was shown me on the island, and the Seri knew it as venomous, but volunteered nothing as to using it on arrows.

That the question of Seri cannibalism must be left open, with a preponderance of evidence against the practice (p. 263), also seems a conservative judgment.

As to shields, McGee learned of loose pelican pelts and turtle-shells (p. 264), I of armor and a large upright shield of hide. Both accounts may be right, one referring to emergency pick-ups, the other ——— to prepared defence or attack.

[7] AA 8, pl. 9, 1906.
[8] BAE-B 78:838, fig. 48, pls. 38, 48.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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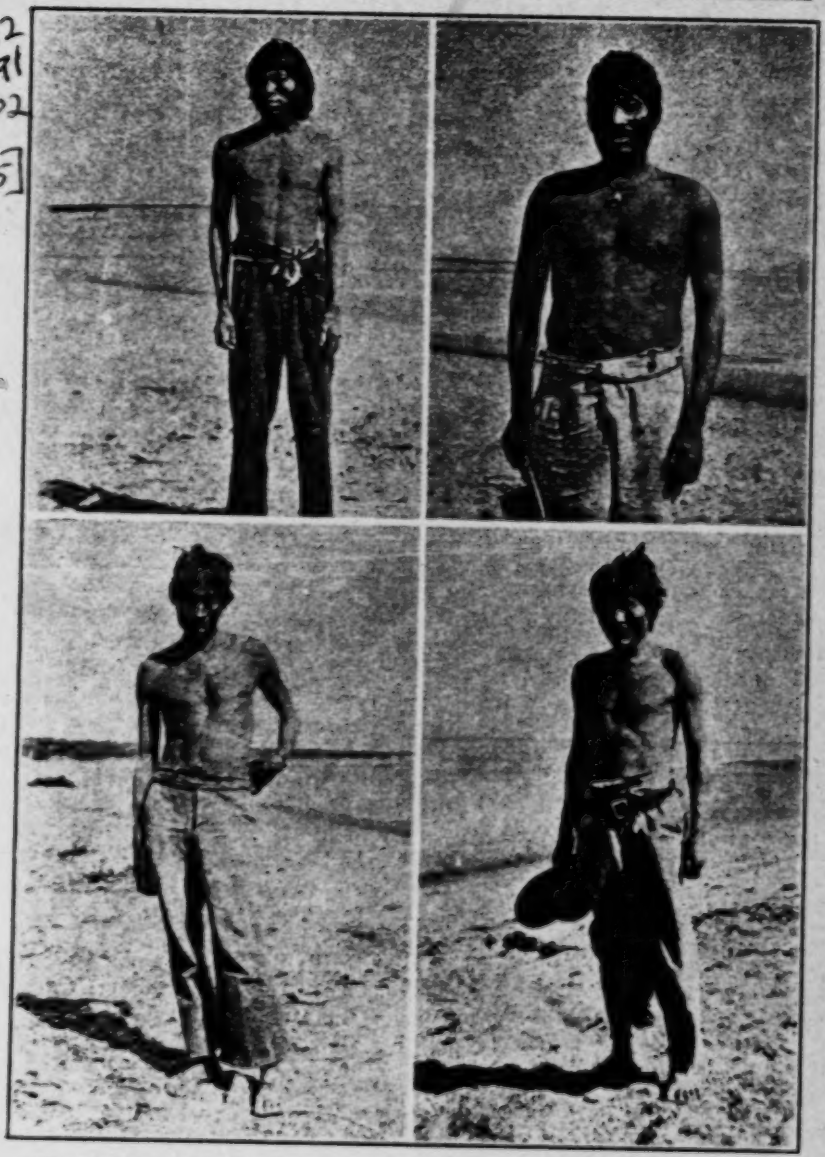

FIG. 1 (upper left). *Young man with long hair.*

FIG. 2 (upper right). *Chico Romero, official Seri chief and principal informant. The largest individual seen.*

FIG. 3 (lower left). *Elderly man of the spare Seri type.*

FIG. 4 (lower right). *Native policeman for the Mexican government.*

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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FIG. 5 (upper left). *Maria, wife of Chico, with their baby.*

FIG. 7 (lower left). *Man, youth, and boy.*

FIG. 6 (upper right). *Heavier Seri type on beach of Tiburon Island, a bay of El Infernillo in background.*

FIG. 8 (lower right). *On Punta San Miguel, mainland, mangroves in background.*

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

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FIG. 9 (upper). *Seri children showing variety of expressions at camera experience.*
FIG. 10 (lower left). *Young woman with sickly baby.*
FIG. 11 (lower right). *Two girls, the shorter unmarried.*

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
NU31 Seri NU31

THE SAVAGE SERIS OF SONORA—I

By EDWARD H. DAVIS AND E. YALE DAWSON

000 us first acquaint ourselves with the life and habits of the Seri before the Spaniard trod upon his thorny land.

131 His homeland speaks first of isolation. Tiburon Island, in the Gulf of California, and the adjacent coast of Sonora are pro-

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FIG. 1. CHICO ROMERO, SERI CHIEF WEARING A KILT OF PELICAN SKINS WHICH USED TO BE THEIR ONLY MATERIAL FOR GARMENTS. NOTE THE CORD MADE OF HUMAN HAIR CARRIED IN THE HAND.

tected on one side by stormy seas and on the other by even more forbidding deserts. The natural isolation of this habitat set its people apart from all other human beings, and the two or three thousand Seris, wandering between their desert island and the mountain-

[p.193(B)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1946) 1945
NU31 5ezi NU31

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FIG. 2. THE PELICAN SKIN ROBE
A TYPICAL WOMAN'S GARMENT BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE COTTON CLOTH AND BAGS THAT REPLACED IT.

131 bounded coastal plain, lived a life so independent and so oblivious of the outside world that they might well have been on another planet.

182 105 The hard, inhospitable natural environment afforded by Seriland long ago moulded the characteristics of its people and their whole mode of life. The distance between reliable food sources in the sea and supplies of fresh water created a pedestrian habit whereby they acquired a remarkable fleetness of foot and tremendous physical endurance against thirst and weariness on the trail. The monotonous sea-food diet induced a wandering, roving life in search of game and vegetal produce to supplement their meager rations. They became a homeless, burden-bearing people, wandering in family

[p. 194(A)]

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FIG. 6. DOMESTIC SCENE IN A SERI VILLAGE

[p. 197(A)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
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FIG. 10. SERI BELLE
WEARING A PAINTED DESIGN SUCH AS FORMERLY WAS INDICATIVE OF THE BLOOD LINE OF A GIVEN CLAN.

264 hut, the rotting flesh and cartilage of its noisome interior to be explored and mouthed by the toddling children or gnawed by the cringing coyote-curs attached to the rancheria.

223 At certain seasons or when deemed propitious by the elders of the family, a pelican harvest was planned. Isla Tasne, some fifteen miles from Tiburon Island, is the haunt and breeding ground of the pelican that served not only as a valuable food supply for the Seris, but also as the chief source of apparel. At such seasons temporary rancherias were set up on the shores of Bahia Kino, and when conditions were favorable, or when hunger prompted them, the balsas [502] would be launched in the evening toward Isla Tasne, the women of the party lying prone on the cane bundles and propelling the craft by paddling with their hands or with large hatchet clam shells. Reaching the island after dark, the balsas were left in charge of the women while the men and older boys, armed with clubs, crept up over the slippery, guano-covered rocks to rush on the roosting fowls and slaughter them. The [264]

[p. 179(B)]

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[231]
[853]

FIG. 12. SERI MOTHER AND BABE
SERI MOTHERS COMMONLY HAVE TOO MUCH MILK AND FREQUENTLY RELIEVE THEMSELVES BY SUCKLING AN ORPHANED PUPPY OR SOMETIMES EVEN A BABY PIG.

302 ing, and were carried in cane tubes. The
386 paints were carefully prepared, applied, and
614 preserved, and, as indispensable feminine accompaniments even on the longest journeys, were among the most highly prized of the people's possessions. The importance of
302 the face-painting custom, established in the
614 old tribal life, remained strong even as the slaughter of the warring tribe progressed

[p. 201(B)]

2:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1923-1940) 1945
NU31 Seri NU31

[291]

FIG. 14. JUAN TOMAS AND NEPHEW
OLD SERI CHIEF BEFORE CHICO ROMERO AND VETERAN OF MANY WARS, IN 1926 AT THE AGE OF 94 YEARS.

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The further extension of settlements necessitated the establishment of military posts from which troops were sent out, first by one, then another governor of Sonora, to destroy all Seris they might find and to discourage their wanton looting and killing. If a strong force was sent out, it was frequently ambushed and many soldiers were left on the field, transfixed by arrows. Many small forces left never to be heard from again. In 1780 an army of national troops met the Seris in several bloody battles in their Cerro Prieto, and claimed to have exterminated the tribe. Yet the Indians retained sufficient vitality to continue their sanguinary raids

[p. 262 (A)]

114 648 [123] their minds and to live among them without undue fear of losing his life. Through the kindness of Señor Thomson the senior author succeeded in making himself a friend of the Seri and, enlarging upon this friendship through long periods of living and traveling among them, has acquired an intimate knowledge of these strange people.

105 178 In 1922 the fishing industry of the Gulf of California was not yet well developed, and it was to be ten years before the village of Kino should appear on the maps of the Sonora coast. The Seris were still isolated in their desert domain and their numbers, then about [161] 250, were maintaining themselves out of reach of the infectious diseases of the white man. The clan life had disappeared, and the people lived as a single tribe with their old chief, Juan Tomas, 90 years old at that time

[291] [481] [482] [415]

FIG. 15. MOVING DAY AMONG THE SERIS
THESE BURDENS, BORNE FOR MANY MILES OVER ROCKS, THROUGH CACTUS AND DEEP SAND, CONTAIN UTENSILS FOR HOUSEKEEPING WHEREVER THE SERIS MAY STOP.

[p. 263(B)]

3: Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940)1945 NU31 Seri NU31

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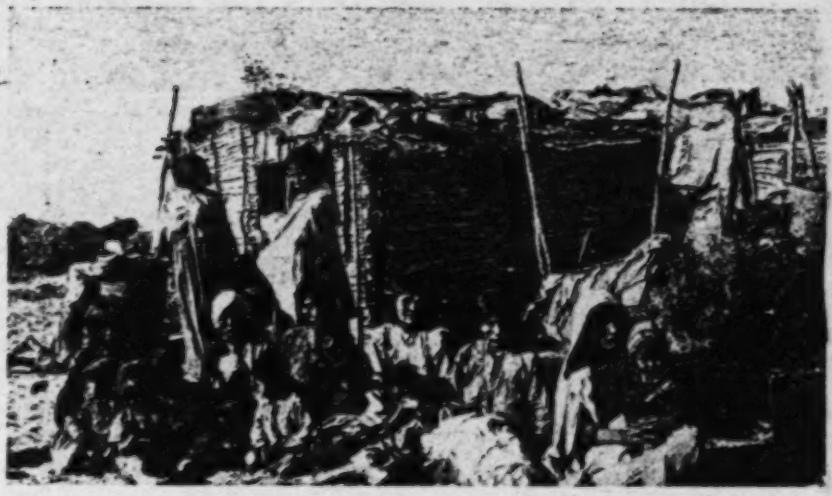

FIG. 22. SOME SERI WOMEN OF THE VILLAGE NEAR KINO

[p. 268(A)]

5:Dawson N-5 (1940) 1944 NU31 Seri NU31

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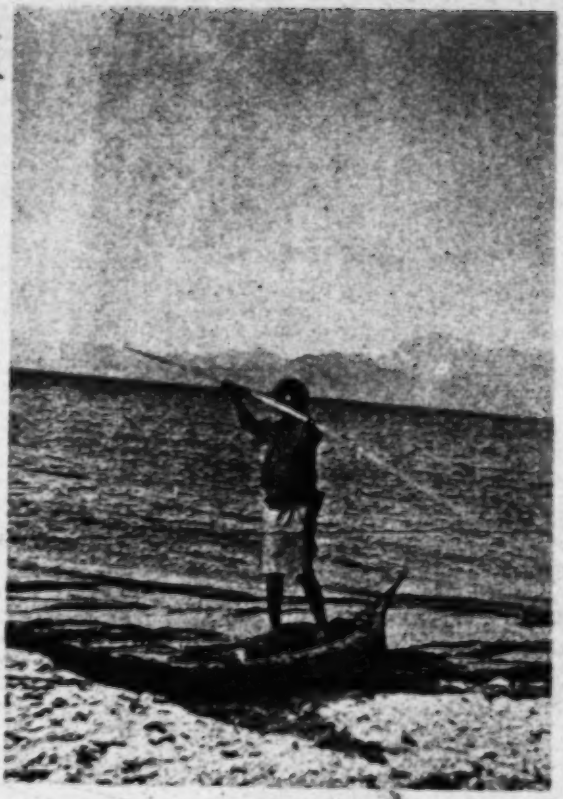

A rare photograph of the last native carrizal reed balsa made by the Seris in 1922. Tiburon Island.

5:Dawson N-5 (1940) 1944 NU31 Seri NU31

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1. A basket of cactus meal.

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2. A Seri village on Tiburon Island. Note the large shells of the sea turtle that serves as food.

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3. Making the Seri basket. House is constructed of ocotillo branches and brush.

5:Dawson N-5 (1940) 1944 NU31 Seri NU31

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Preparing a mesquite bean meal cake on the stone metate.

Seri women carrying firewood back to camp. Note the baskets and the head pads made of mesquite or torote.

7: Marroquin E-5 (1955) 1957 NU31 Seri NU31

Distribución geográfica

000 Los indios seris viven en dos pequeñas poblaciones de la costa del Estado de Sonora, frente al Golfo de California, en Desemboque y en Punta Chueca. De allí pasan con alguna frecuencia a la Isla de Tiburón en el mencionado Golfo de California.

En Desemboque viven aproximadamente 35 familias seris y en Punta Chueca 16. Tan solo en el primero de estos dos lugares se hallan establecidas 5 familias "yoris" (mestizas).

Problemas sanitarios

Los seris carecen de defensa ante ciertas enfermedades que, como el sarampión y la gripe, adquieren en sus relaciones con los "yoris"; estas enfermedades causan muchas defunciones entre los indígenas.

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[516]

Familia indígena seri de Desemboque, Sonora. *Foto Enriqueta Yurchenco.*

Según el anciano seri Chico Romero, último gobernador seri, hubo una fuerte epidemia de viruela allá por 1897, que causó la muerte de una tercera parte de la tribu que se encontraba residiendo en Costa Rica, ranchería de la costa de Sonora.

En 1955 se propagó el sarampión entre los seris, ocasionando gran número de víctimas, niños y adultos; la actividad del maestro rural Leo Sandoval, del lingüista Eduardo Mosser y de las autoridades sanitarias de Hermosillo, lograron contener la mortalidad; no obstante, el número de defunciones llegó al 5 % del total de la población nativa.

7: Marroquin E-5 (1955) 1957 NU31 Seri NU31

Geographical Distribution

The Seri Indians live in two small Indian villages on the coast of the Gulf of California, State of Sonora, Desemboque and Punta Chueca. From there they frequently go to Isla Tiburón in the Gulf of California.

Approximately 35 Seri families live in Desemboque and 16 in Punta Chueca. Only in the first of these two places are there five "yori" (mestizo) families.

Sanitary Problems

The Seris have no defense against certain diseases which, like measles and flu, they acquire in their relations with the "yoris"; these diseases cause many deaths among the Indians. According to the ancient Seri Chico Romero, last Seri Governor, there was a great smallpox epidemic there about 1897 which caused the death of a third of the tribe which was living in Costa Rica, a small ranch on the coast of Sonora.

Seri Indian woman of Desemboque, Sonora. *Photo Henriette Yurchenco.*

In 1955 measles appeared among the Seris, with a great number of victims, children and adults; the actions of the rural teacher Leo Sandoval, the Linguistic Eduardo Mosser and of the sanitation authorities of Hermosillo, succeeded in keeping the mortality rate down; nevertheless, the number of deaths reached 5% of the total native population.

9:34alkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

462 desert plants or littoral fishlets from tide-pools
or of the shellfish. Both men and women will
[224] bring in an occasional rattler, although women
are more likely to do this because they spend more
[857] time in the desert. Children of both sexes are
engaged in the female occupations here, but ado-
[883] lescent boys already join in their fathers' hunts
on land or sea.

342 Housing has undergone some changes. In the
184 desert or on Tiburon the Indians construct the
kind of shelter they did in the recorded past,
an ocotillo frame, bent over in the middle and
covered up with dried plant debris and twigs
from the desert, or with the sail cloth. But in
Desemboque they have more substantial houses—
of wattle and adobe, with flat roofs, rectangular
or square, often with corrugated tin or drift
planks and other debris piled up on top, or along
the walls.

178 In the remainder of their material culture, not
much has been left from years past although one
must remember that from the very beginning of
recorded Serian history it has been of a most
[291] meager sort. Pelican robes, which some Seris ap-
[412] parently still wore in 1930 are gone for good.
So are the stone tools. So is the pottery which had
[323] probably disappeared in Kroeber's time. The hu-
[301] man hair necklace with rattlesnake rattles is also
[291] a thing of the past. The rattlesnake skin belts
McGee (1898:170) described and figured are
probably all gone. I havn't seen or heard of any.

412 But what remains much as they had been in
285 1894 are the bone-awls. These are made of burros'
carpals and the blossoming of basketry, owing to

[p. 8A]

Coyote figures out probably

262 as an important and perhaps disreputable figure in the mythology although nothing but scraps [773] and bits of information suggest this. It is possible that there is actually a taboo on eating this animal or perhaps it is so disreputable that eating its flesh would put a gourmant in an inferior position.

How important is the Seri mammalian diet is hard to tell. It certainly looms more heavily during [224] the winter, because in the cool season hunting is easier than during the heat of the summer and [221] in fact this is when most of it is done by the ardent hunters. Too, winter subjects the Seris to greater hazards and is apt to increase their dependence on the desert resources over that during the summer, even if these resources are scantier at that time.

[136] To all of these animals one should add the semi-[224] wild burros running about the extensive Mexican rancherias. The Indians poach on them frequently using their fire arms, usually the .22 caliber rifles. In any case, it appears that during the summer when the field work was carried out, the mammalian diet figures quite lightly on the Seri table.

252 *Food preparation*: Very little is done in the preparation of the mammalian meat. All that I [263] could observe was the boiling of it in hot water spiced with salt. The Indians were saying that in order to have the meat of a peccary, deer or bighorn ready to eat one must boil it 2-3 hours. The same procedure is followed with the meat of the burros. In contrast to this, as shall be seen later, [251] fish are boiled as well as roasted while the turtles are also dried and salted. Preparation of meat is [462] done by women, certainly at least in the encampments when they are present.

262 *Food preferences*: Some of the Seri food preferences have already been mentioned. At the top of the list as the desirables are the peccary, the deer, the bighorn and the blacktail jackrabbit; at the bottom is the badger, whose meat "is not much good." There is also preference by sex. Females of both the bighorn and peccary are preferred over the males "because they do not have the bad odor like the males." This sort of favoritism also occurs among the Mexicans. However, the Indians did not elaborate beyond this point.

237 *Other economic uses*: Apart from meat, hides are also used. The hides of the deer, bighorn and 178 peccary had been used for sleeping mats although this matter has been expressed in the past tense. [513] Miguel Barnett also suggested that the bighorn hides had been used for clothing by the Indians [291] in the past—but he neglected to say how long ago. During Kroeber's stays, no Seris went about in the animal or bird (pelican) skins but earlier when McGee visited them they went about in these simple garments. Judging then by Miguel's memory, the use of the bighorn hide for clothing must be pushed back to the period of World War I or even earlier.[1]

[1] Miguel Barnett indicated that the "fur" of the bighorn had once been worn for the cold season "but not now."

[P 10 A]

StMalkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

262 pelicans are not; they are regarded as "bad food," unfit for eating. No further explanation has been offered here and it might be that the same sort of prejudice works here as in the case of the adult birds. Otherwise, reasons for rejecting eggs for food are probably a matter of mere customary attitude without any particular rationalization. In a few instances, the dove being one example, the eggs were said to have been rejected because they were "too small to bother."

237 Other economic uses made of the birds are ex-
291 tremely few. At one time, the pelican skins were used for clothing and, in fact, in McGee's time they represented, perhaps, the most important item of clothing for the Seris, having been worn in shape of wrap-around robes, usually covering the lower part of the body. Moreno reported these robes as still is use "30 years ago or more," in the early twenties, but in Kroeber's time these [177] robes were already discarded in favor of the European garment. The Seri, nevertheless, still preserve skins of these birds—the white pelican, [439] larger of the two, always had been favored here—and occasionally sell them to the visitors. Another 237 use made of the feather is in the arrows. The 411 cormorants, heron and the owls had been especially mentioned in this connection. But it is certain that they were not the only birds so exploited and also that this particular use went out of business along with the disappearance of the bow and arrow as the principal weapons. The use of feather for arrows may well continue into the present in a somewhat degraded form. The Seri boys play a [857] great deal with bows and arrows, shooting them at any moving available target. They'll pick up any available feathers.

Pets

231 Somewhat desultory use is made of birds as pets. During my visit I have seen doves and an egret kept in houses as pets by the adults and fed quite frequently. The number and variety of birds which may become pets in households may well * 825 be larger. Pelicans and sea-gulls are less fortun-
857 ate. They are often shot at and over-powered by the boys. But instead of taking them to the households, the boys stage games, shooting them at point blank from bows and arrows and pea- shooters. These somewhat bloody executions take place almost every day. The pattern is the same. Only the subject of the game changes, depending on the available species of bird or animal.

Hunting

223 It is hard to speak of hunting in connection with birds, because there is so little effort made to go out and get them. The main exception is the duck and this, as I already mentioned, is hunted on Isla Patos and clobbered at night with sticks and stones in great numbers. This is one of the few instances in which the Seris will go out of their way to get a bird. Sea-gulls and cormorants and, more rarely, pelicans are dispatched by pea-
[411] shooter (stone), sticks, small clubs and, on occasion, with a shot from a .22 caliber rifle.

[P. 18A]

9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

262 [225] [439] tions to San Esteban or San Lorenzo. The turtles now are as much a food as a "cash crop." While the Seris are camped at Desemboque, most of the turtle catch is sold alive to the Mexican fish traders who are headquartered in Nogales and Hermosillo and take the catch along with the fishes to the markets in these towns and sometimes even as far as Phoenix and Tucson.

Of the remainder, the most frequent items that show up on the Seri table are probably the rattlesnakes and the desert tortoises. The rattlers are eaten with relish—only the heads and the tails are discarded as poisonous. The larger chuckawalla is considered a particular delicacy but is rarely caught because it lives in a somewhat distant region. The remainder of the animals listed as "eaten" are collected only incidentially.

It is probable that very few species are really left alone and not taken as food at various times, especially when famine distress overruns the camp. As far as I could determine, only three species are rejected as altogether unfit to eat: the gecko, the night lizard and the toad. All three are believed to be highly toxic "in flesh and blood" although real harm could be caused only by the toad. Besides, the two lizards are really tiny creatures and would make little difference when a survival is at stake.

*825 [439] 237 [439] Few reptilians are ever used as anything but food. The sea turtles in a way are at certain times, that is, when they are sold for hard cash to the Mexican traders, whether live or sliced and salted. The only other creature I ever heard about as being used for anything at all was the coral snake. At least one informant suggested that in the past its hide has been used for hat decoration. But coral snakes are scarce and this again could be only incidental. It may be that the rattlesnake hide, especially of the large specimens of the western diamondback, is sold occasionally to a passing visitor but this again is a rare occurance.[9]

Food Preparation

252 [263] Food preparation of the majority of animals in this group is no different than of most other animals. They are simply skinned, tossed into a pot of boiling water and cooked, occasionally with salt as the only ingredient. Larger individuals, notably turtles, will be quartered and then boiled or roasted on a grill. The chuckawalla and the desert tortoise are said to be fried, but whether this is the usual procedure I can't say, because only a few of them had been brought into camp in my presence. The tail of the Gila monster supposedly had been fried in oil "in the past."

Food Preferences and Taboos

262 It is obvious that some creatures in this group are considered better food than others. The chuckawalla is especially favored. When several were brought in from San Esteban, I couldn't persuade the owners to part with them, although I offered a huge price (for local conditions). The captors took

[9]Another use in the past—snake-skin belt worn. It is illustrated by McGee (1898:170, Fig. 7).

[291] [P. 23A]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1968 NU31 Seri NU31

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Seri Indians

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175 if they were as hungry then as they are today, they would not stop to
641 spike a man up preparatory to serving him. Their only tools then were
246 rocks to use as hammers and hoop iron for knives, and these are in
114 universal use today.

[412] There is no doubt that the men were killed, but I think these mining men purposely exaggerated their findings, if any.

648 There is no doubt that the Seris were brave fighters, treacherous
721 murderers, sparing neither men, women or children on their raids,
727 killing ruthlessly. But there is one charge which cannot be brought against them, which cannot be said of many tribes north of the border. So far as I could find out, they never tortured nor scalped.

648 The Seris never took prisoners and they never inter-married with
721 other tribes, so their strain is pure.

727 There was one exception. Sixty or seventy years ago, the Seri
583 Chief Coyote Iguana and his band of warriors held up the stage between Hermosillo and Guaymas, and killed all except a handsome Spanish girl of the better class. This girl, Coyote Iguana made his wife and by her raised a family. One granddaughter still survived in 1924, and while more attractive than the general run of Seri, her complexion was fully as dark.

604 The Seris, Ishmaelites among the native tribes of Mexico---the most fascinating Indians in North America!

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123 *Reception Committee, Tiburon Island - 1935*

115 On the twenty-fifth of April, nineteen twenty-two, I engaged the services of Roberto Thompson, who with his father and grandfather

[text continues on p. 149]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Alberto Mendoza and Lupe Astorga getting water from cactus - used for cooking

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Child leading Petra - blind woman, Kino Bay - 1938

10: Davis E-S (1922-ca. 1939) 1968 NU31 Seri NU31

Blind Seri Indian, 1939
Best paddler we had

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Candelario completes his decoration
one of our paddlers - 1936

123 handed to show their friendliness.

142 One was a young man with rather pleasant features, his braided
291 hair hanging below his shoulders. His name was Antonio Herrera. The
123 other was a wild-looking specimen called Ramon Blanco. His hair was a
[302] tangled mat with a short braid behind, suspicious black piercing eyes,
long sparse moustache and chin-beard hiding a broad cruel mouth. He
[411] wore the remnants of an old sweater, a short dirty kilt, or skirt,
nearly to his knees, a belt full of cartridges, mostly empty, and a
long knife in a rawhide scabbard.

123 The young man had been baptized and given a name by Roberto, who
[705] had acted as godfather or *patróna*, many years ago. He wore a hat,
[291] jacket, and pants of blue denim, and *guaraches*, or sandals of rawhide.

We shook hands all around and then they called and halloed in the brush and soon three women and a lot of children, wild and half-
[415] clothed, filed into camp. The women were tall, gaunt, unkempt, ragged
[482] and barefooted, paying us not the slightest notice. They were bearing
[422] on their heads large baskets filled with all their earthly posses-
[854] sions---cooking ollas, scraps of cloth, pieces of turtle meat, bone
[231] brads, hair brushes, and odds and ends. They carried, also, an infant or two wrapped in odd bits of rags. Several gaunt dogs followed in their wake.

342 In all, three families came trailing in, removed their household
[512] equipment from their heads and resumed their interrupted and primitive housekeeping. Each family occupied its apartment in the row of brush shelters, separated from each other only by brush partitions with a total lack of privacy. These shelters, always open to the sea, serve as shade from the fierce rays of the sun, and also as windbreaks, but
[361] are no protection from infrequent rains. They are occupied only for a brief period and then their nomadic tenants move on to fresh *cahuasa*, or sea turtle range.

123 Soon, a third man arrived while we were near the huts, Manuel
[42] Encina. He was a man of sixty-five, gray hair and mustache, seamed features, and not evil looking. He was out of breath. He had gone for water to the same water hole where we had been yesterday, struck our tracks, had left his water cans and hurried back to warn his people. He was greatly relieved to find friends.

Since he had gone for water, inquiry revealed there had been no water in camp for two days, and six adults and one girl of thirteen and six children were thirsty. We gladly gave them one of our five-
[225] gallon cans of water and they were very grateful. They had caught a
[262] sea turtle the day before and gave us some turtle steaks which looked like beef or mutton.

312 As the camp was without water and we were running short, the young
402 man and Encina offered to get some. Each took a *palanca*, or short
123 shoulder pole with knotched ends, fitted empty five-gallon cans in

Seri - wild boy - 1925

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[291]

Seri child

261 will exist on very small rations, bear burdens, and walk long dis-
262 tances. Their food is anything that walks, flies, crawls or swims,
[252] and they eat it raw with the same relish that we eat it cooked. There is but one thing they will not eat; they draw the line on the Gila monster. They are the most perfect type of human being adapted to desert conditions that exists today. Convey them blindfolded many miles into the heart of the desert, empty-handed, remove their blinders, and they will find both food and water where others would perish. The Papagos and Yaquis do almost as well."

302 We gave the women a small bag of flour and three or four cubes of
[123] sugar around, and the men three packets of tobacco each and two boxes of matches. Matches with them are very precious and are rarely used. Rather than use a match a woman came over to our fire and borrowed some coals to rebuild her fire. From this point the nearest matches are a good deal over one hundred and twenty miles distant, so they have to economize in every thing.

422 Each rag is valuable, and flour, sugar, coffee and rifle shells
[434] are absolutely priceless. While they know money, it has no value here.
[437] Only commodities go here. The most highly prized things are boards to
[389] make boats and rifle shells to get game and protect themselves. All empty shells are saved, the primer punched out, straightened, a match head put in, a little pinch of powder on top, the shell filled up, a long bullet inserted, the shell pinched tight, and a fresh set of ammunition is made.

142 The women and children certainly did look wild. Their hair was
• 291 frowsy and unkempt, their skirts and waists a patchwork of dirty rags
302 coming just below the knees; their features seamed and hard and cruel. Their complexion was very dark. They had no under garments. The children wore only a dirty shirt coming a little below their thighs, and even that is ragged. One or two of the women had a dirty bandanna over their heads. How I wished I could have seen them in their ancient, picturesque pelican-skin kilts!

302 I happened to witness the operation of a Seri beauty parlor. A
[824] mother brushed the hair of her thirteen-year-old daughter with a brush
[283] made from the fibrous roots of a certain grass tied together with
[515] sinew. During the operation if she came across a *piojo*, and she found several, she plucked him away from his feeding ground and dropped him in the fire.

The hair neatly brushed, the mother then mixed paint in a small vessel and with a tiny stick painted a bright blue design under the eyes and across the cheeks and nose, and then she added narrow white stripes, which, contrasting with the blue and the dark skin, produced a very striking effect. This paint is easily removed and the women often paint and remove three different face designs in one day.

304 I did not see tattoo work on either men or women, nor did they
301 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians.

000 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians. I saw no skin or
164 cutaneous disease, or evidence of tuberculosis or of trachoma---the curse of our Indians.

142 One boy-child of five years was a handsome child---fat, round,
202 sturdy, with roving great black eyes, large thick lips, a picture of
• [241] perfect health. He was almost naked. His hair was done in a pigtail
[857] with a red string braided into it. His face like all the others was dirty, but he waded into the shallow water with a short spear and I saw him catch two crabs with his little harpoon. The water did not bother his face.

415 They had no plates or eating tools, except large deep clam shells,
912 cast up by the sea, which served as cups and dippers. Their long, keen
264 belt knives were used for cutting, carving or skinning, and always the
[259] fingers for eating. They gathered in a circle around an olla of seeds of long grass growing on the sea bottom prepared by winnowing, parching and grinding, and then cooked with turtle oil. Each one dipped his or her fingers into the olla and conveyed them to the mouth without losing a drop, and licked them off with great relish.

231 The dogs eat with the family. There were six or seven half-starved
264 ones. If someone picked up a piece of turtle flipper the dog often took the first lick at it, bit off a piece or licked it before it reached the owner's mouth. The dogs were not punished. They were just slapped to keep them out of the pots.

123 We had a great time that evening in Seriland. The young man played
534 his violin. This consisted of a hollow box cut out of a *palo verde*
[824] tree, and a piece of pine about sixteen inches long; terminating in a
[283] hollow where a single peg was fitted. The one string was twisted deer
[237] sinew, and the bridge was a small round clam shell at the far end. The
[533] bow was a small bent stick and some black horsehair. On the handle was a wad of rosin fastened underneath. By fingering this string a few weak squeaky notes were made, and this was the classical music of the Seris.

Manuel Encina seized his gourd rattle and began chanting. Herrera tapped a tin can and I beat on an inverted basket and the orchestra
535 was in full swing. A young girl, Rosa, dragged out a turtle shell and
123 standing on it began to dance. This dance consisted of stepping up and down quickly with each foot alternately, and this stamping, barefooted, emitted a hollow sound. Every once in a while I let out an
[24] Indian yell which pleased the Seris very much. For two hours they had a real swell time. We took one flashlight of the proceeding.

[392] Each family was in their hut, which afforded very slight shelter
[362] as they were only partially roofed over and the sides were broken
[354] down in places. The huts were all adjoining and each had a little
[361] campfire, which did not give much illumination, so the dancing was in semi-darkness.

(text continues on p. 163)

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Carrying firewood

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Seri basket maker - 1934

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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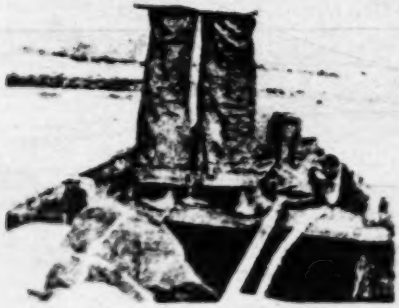
Poised for harpooning sea turtles off Tiburon Island - 1936



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The catch

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10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Vene Thomson, Pancho Olivieria and Roberto Thomson at Tecoaate, on north coast, upending whale ribs cast up on the beach. Although thoroughly dried and bleached for years by a semitropic sun, it took their united efforts to elevate these ribs.---E.H.D.

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Roberto Thomson, Santo Blanco and Edward H. Davis

five-gallon cans full. They were fastened one each end of a *palanca*, or shoulder pole, and thus brought to camp. If anyone thinks this is easy they should try it over rocky, uneven, sandy, stony ground, dodging thorny vegetation at every step. 123

The colors of the mountains were mostly red of volcanic character, with great streaks of yellow and pink, deeply cut with side canyons and sharp ridges, all similar to other desert ranges. [133]

The men caught a few crabs and gathered clams in the afternoon, which helped out our larder. One of them told about his wife being shot. He said they had a big fiesta and during the drunk, a Seri shot at his head. He happened to be stooping alongside his wife and the bullet buried itself in his wife's thigh. We could feel it through her clothes.

A good many years ago when stages ran between Nogales and Guaymas, the Seris held up the stage, killed the men and captured one Mexican girl. She was brought here and made the wife of one of the chiefs, Coyote Iguana, and she bore children. Some years later her brothers came here to induce her to return, but she refused, saying that she was ashamed to go back and she had children here. About fifteen years ago in a battle with the Papagos, two of her sons were killed. 648 727 563

The Papagos have taken toll of many Seris, these hunted Indians who are such fascinating and ingenious companions, whether they are harpooning turtle or packing water through the thorny wastes. 648

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Seris making fire (with fire drill) - Island of Tiburon

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Seri faces

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Seri young man

Seri Indian

123 [202] It was a beautiful morning in early May, and the water was still as a pond, reflecting all the sunrise tints like a mirror. After a breakfast of clams and broth, bread and sand and bronco tea, we made a big smoke and were answered by a similar smoke two miles off, so we knew our friends were on the way.

123 482 [415] In one hour they began trailing in, the women each with a load on her head, walking graceful and erect. On one head was an inverted turtle shell containing nearly all the family belongings done up in rags. On the top was the most precious belonging of all---the rifle. The man carried two or three ollas and other things on a shoulder stick. Everything necessary for their home was carried on their heads.

123 Soon the Indian Blanco was seen paddling in his *balsa;* he also had a load and had paddled all the way from Ironwood camp against wind and sometimes tide. As they were all very thirsty we gave them water around. They immediately went to the shore as it was low tide, and began gathering small oysters from the rocks. Soon each woman returned with a half bushel of them on her head.

About three o'clock and for an hour or so thereafter, Antonio Herrera, the Chief's son Chico, the old Chief Juan Tomas, two other men and one woman, came drifting into camp with their dogs. Each one was loaded with things. They were a pretty wild looking bunch. There was very little food and little water for so many.

648 731 The Chief said that a day or two before, some of his men had a fight with some sailors (Mexicans) on the Island of San Estevan four or five miles off the south west corner of Tiburon. Nobody was killed, but the two boats, the wealth of the Island, had drifted away and were lost, leaving eight men marooned on the Island. They had gone there to gather *sescal* to make drink to celebrate a wedding to come off soon. Three men were five days without water. They sent up frantic smoke signals every day. At last they were seen, and help went for them in the only remaining boat on the Island. They were rescued.

648 484 123 The Chief and his men and women, with us, are going to Hermosillo ninety miles afoot with all their belongings to ask the Government for food and help.

142 [622] [302] [291] The Chief looks to be seventy years old, a grim dark-skinned individual with a thin fringe of hair on his upper lip, broad nose, wide nostrils, small black eyes. He is well-built and erect. None of these that I have seen so far have any fat. They are lean and sinewy. The young men are of large build, high cheek bones, some with hair on their lips, their long black hair braided; sometimes with a strand of red worsted. All were either barefooted or wore sandals. I saw one pair of sandals made out of turtle hide; another of burro hide.

648 123 When the Chief arrived, the sail of a vessel was seen over the beach. Bob recognized it as belonging to a launch of a Yaqui Indian

[text continues on p. 180]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Fastening feathers on arrows with sinew held tight in his teeth.
1929

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123 but nothing happened.

123 622 [115] We reached Hermosillo at three in the afternoon, and as we landed Roberto and Sara met us, and Roberto embraced me. Then the Seri Indian Chief rushed up and fairly hugged me in his joy at seeing me again. A timid wild-looking Seri boy, of fifteen years of age, shyly shook hands with the *Americano*, while all the Mexican men and women, fully one hundred in number, looked on open-mouthed and wide-eyed, to see the Chief of the wildest and lowest of savage Indians in North America, rush up and embrace a white man.

We all climbed into Roberto's auto-truck, and my things were brought to Hotel Cohen, and then we all went to Roberto's home and stayed all the afternoon. He had just returned from the coast the day before, and Juan Tomas was determined to come also and greet me, and the boy---a nephew---hung on to the Chief, and finally Roberto said he would have to return on foot if he brought him. Juan Tomas said that made no difference. He would walk to the coast eighty or ninety miles, if only he could come.

• [291] [302] He was probably seventy-five years old. He wore a hat, but his hair was straggly and he had a slight moustache. He wore shirt and trousers and a dirty kilt---remanent of the Pelican-skin-kilt---around his waist, and he was barefooted. The boy had a not unpleasant face, long wild hair, shirt, pants, and a cotton kilt reached to his knees. He, too, was barefooted.

I gave the Chief a knife, and the boy a red crayon and fifty cents. With the crayon he made a V on his kilt. He was very shy and always kept in a shadow, or in the background, and he spoke no Spanish although he knew the Spanish alphabet.

Sara showed some photographs and postcards in a baloptican in a dark room, and among them were pictures of some Seris and myself. These created much excitement with the Chief and the boy, and they jabbered together in the Seri language with animation. They recognized some of the subjects, their own people.

584 622 648 123 Juan Tomas is to be married soon to an elderly Seri dame, and we have been invited to attend the fiesta. He has been laying in the trousseau for the bride, and several gallons of mescal. A steer or burro will have to be provided, and all the fixin's and nothing will be left undone to make a very festive occasion. When asked to show us his gifts he reluctantly brought forth a package which he carefully unwrapped and disclosed eighteen yards of *manta*, two red pieces and one pink piece of Calico, some red handkerchiefs, and one box for painting the face. He carefully wrapped these up again and put them in the room set apart for him and the boy.

[608] [583] The woman he is to marry has no male relatives from whom she can be bought, so the Chief appointed a man and created him Uncle *pro-tempore*, and to him the Chief is going to give a rifle and a blanket as the purchase price. Pretty high!

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Seri Indians at home

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Seri Indians preparing their meal

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Santo Blanco and Edward H. Davis - this hombre gambled away his only shirt - Sonora - 1925

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Seri method of carrying infant

177 been fastened with a string---each child eager for a safety pin. A
123 little child two and a half years old was shoved forward for a pin, its round black eyes dancing with anticipation, but its dress had no opening in front, so I laughed and shook my head and everyone appreciated the joke. But, not to be defeated, a little girl untied the child's waist from behind and spread it open, exposing its little brown body from head to feet, and called my earnest attention to it. I then pinned up the dress. Then the older ones crowded around me, but I had used up a whole paper of pins, so I shook my head. I gave the empty paper to an eager child, although a dozen hands were outstretched for it. By making the children happy I pleased the parents.

123 By this time the flour soup was thick and ready, and Roberto baled it out with a cup into the various vessels eagerly outstretched to receive it. As the cup would drip, little hands caught the priceless drops before they reached the sand. As each got his proportion he began sticking his fingers into the mess and licking them off. Many took their *pinole* to camp and the others secured a taste also. A small piece of bread dropped into the sand was snatched up, by a child, from under the nose of a dog. She rubbed off the sand and devoured it.

When all had vanished to their various camps I opened the box of candies---small round drops of green, red and yellow. I filled our coffee pot and went to each camp and gave each man, woman and child about ten candies.

439 Since I wanted shell necklaces, the women had combed the beaches
123 and gathered plenty of shells, and strung them while resting. This evening they were draped about their necks, and they wished to trade, so I trade for about a dozen---one small round mirror for one, five needles for another, five safety pins for another, blue face paint for another. Mirrors were most in favor.

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206 *Seri outside beauty parlor*

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Maria Jesusa - Great grand-daughter of Lola Casanova and Coyote Iguana. She is self-conscious and embarrassed to face the white man's magic box for the first time. Her face is decorated in blue, in a typical Seri design. Her features are more regular and attractive than the pure Seri and her clothing shows more taste and pride than her half sisters. Taken at La Cruz, island of Tiburon---E.H.D.

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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[301]

Seri beauties

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Juan Tomas - Chief of Seris, 1922

622 Thus passed a very striking character among the primitive races of Sonora, Mexico. He was brave and fearless in battle; crafty, cautious, and cunning in attack; cruel and merciless to his enemies. He was rarely caught off his guard, and always managed to extricate himself and his men from difficult situations. He was quick to think and act, and was wise with the wisdom learned at first hand on desert and sea from a rugged nature, reluctant to give up her secrets. He was a master hand at *balsa* building, a good hunter, fisherman, harpooner of *cahuama* (sea turtle), a good surfman, a good gambler, and an expert tracker. It was not unusual to possess two or three wives, but the old Chief, while married three times, had only one wife at a time. He was quite fond of the writer, and used to greet him with the true Mexican *abrazo*.

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[123] It was in 1922 that I first met the grim old warrior on the shores of Tiburon, whither I had gone on a quest for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.

[142] He was very dark, of medium height, thick set, with a broad, deep chest, very muscular, with shaggy brows and deep set eyes which, even at that age, ninety years, burned like coals of fire, and were suspicious and wary. He wore a braided pigtail down his back which contained a few gray hairs. For clothing, he wore a ragged shirt and an old pair of overalls, with a short kilt hanging from a belt, through which stuck a long naked knife of hoop iron, ground on abrasive rocks and keen as a razor.

[302] [298] [411]

[291] From infancy to the grave, the freedom of his feet was never hampered by shoes. Even at that advanced age, and until his last illness, he was perfectly able to care for himself, and follow his nomadic tribe on its devious trails along the coast and far in the interior. A walk of a hundred miles was not unusual. For ten rifle cartridges a Seri Indian once walked forty or fifty miles to deliver my message to Juan Tomas. From the time we first met, our friendship was never broken.

[484]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

Chico Romero - Seri dressed in Pelican skins - 1926

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Seri Concha in Pelican skin robe or shirt - 1926

123 It was March and the night wind was cold, but we did not dare light
223 a fire, so we hugged our blankets close to us for warmth until Santo Blanco judged the Pelicans were sound asleep. We could hear the waters of the Gulf roaring softly as they broke against the cliffs far below us.

At midnight Santo Blanco lighted his torch and the other Indians
[21] did likewise. They all wore rawhide sandals to keep their feet from being cut on the sharp rocks. Santo Blanco was agile as a cat, as he jumped from rock to rock on the steep slope holding his torch over head. Part way down the party split, leaving Santo Blanco, Roberto and myself. I had a flashlight which threw a feeble ray on nearby
[134] rocks and then shot off into blackness. The rocks were slippery from droppings of thousands of cormorants, gulls, Pelicans and other sea birds and climbing down rocks on the steep slope and that on a dark night, was risky if not dangerous, for if we slipped or missed our footing, we might roll, bump a few times and drop from a high cliff into the sea.

Santo Blanco was far below us and at last we could hear him clubbing Pelicans over the head and by the time we reached him he had several dead Pelicans spread on the rocks and he was bringing in the last of them near where we had stopped.

There lay five of these great silver gray birds, each boasting a wing spread of ten feet, as against seven feet of the golden eagle. The flashlight picked them out, one by one, with their long necks, long bills, and with pouches on the nether mandibles for temporary storage of their catch. They are very awkward and ungainly as they stand in groups on rocks at the edge of the tide, but when their great pinions are spread in flight over the sea, they are the epitome of grace.

That was a heavy load, over one hundred pounds, for one man to pack up those steep slippery rocks. I suggested that we help Santo Blanco to the top, but Roberto said the Pelicans were covered with lice and it was not advisable, but with Santo a few more or less made no difference. So he tied the birds together and swung them over his shoulders leaving his hands free for climbing. His torch had burned out and our only light was my flashlight to pick out hand and foot holds. At times we would reach down and give him a lift where the rocks were steepest, but for the most part he struggled alone. Sometimes he would find a few steps like a stairway and then he would look for an easy way, using both hands to pull himself up, but there was no easy way. It was a herculean task to climb those slippery rocks and one time the load almost pulled him over backward, but he recovered his balance and finally the crest of the hill was reached and the rest was down hill on an easy trail.

The boys already had a camp fire going near the beach and as soon as Santo deposited his load, they all fell to and began skinning the

[text continues on p. 217]

10: Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

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Edward H. Davis and Pelican skin robe made for him by Seri Indians - 1934

123 223 [262] birds. As soon as the skin was off the breast was laid on top of the coals and roasted. The meat was red as raw beef, but it was free of fishy flavor and tasted excellent. The Indians ate pelican flesh till daylight.

252 [123] We gave them a generous helping of flour in a pail and this with water from a canteen, Santo stirred vigorously with a stick and then kneaded the dough with his hands until it was of the right consistency. He rolled hunks of this into little balls of dough about the size of golf balls, which he laid on his blanket. The boys picked these up, patted them flat like pancakes, scraped away ashes and sand from the edge of the fire, placed their pancakes in the hollow, covered them with hot ashes and hot sand, and in about three minutes pulled them out all baked brown. They shook the ashes and sand from them, leaving them clean and ready to eat. I am telling this in detail to show how simple cooking can be done without a dutch-oven, frying pan, or cooking grease, far from civilization.

281 [123] We were soon paddled across to their village on the shores of Kino Bay and the skins turned over to Mrs. Santo. The skins had been split down the back, leaving the breast unmarred. The wings and legs had already been removed, and she sewed the skins together with sinew recovered from the birds. The boys had secured an extra pelican making six, three to a side, then placed together and sewed lengthwise, making a robe three and a half feet wide by seven feet long.

[342] [291] [301]

Pegging out and drying a Pelican skin robe by a Seri Indian woman - 1936

281 The Indians made a mound of sand full length of the robe and amply wide rounding off the top. On this the robe was spread, flesh side up, and pinned to the mound by slender slivers of *carrizo* and left exposed to the sun. The skins were singularly free from oil or fat and in a few hours, the robe was cured. The pins removed, the sand shaken from the plumage, and it was ready to use as a blanket covering at night or in old times, as clothing wrapped around the body.

The robes of silvery gray are from male Pelicans and are larger and more attractive than robes from the female birds, which have white breasts, edged with gray.

• 291 177 Before the garments and costumes of civilization encroached on the Seris, Pelican robes and deer skins were the only clothing worn by the natives, but now they have adopted civilized ways to a great extent, Pelican robes as clothing became obsolete.

To use the clay as paint, a bit of water is placed on a stone and the clay is rubbed into it to make a paste. It is then applied to the face (Fig. 4). It spreads smoothly and adheres firmly to the skin. The blue was formerly used for decorating pottery, clay figurines, headdresses, fetishes, arrows, wrist guards, and cane gaming sticks, as well as for face painting. In curing the sick, the shaman sometimes used the blue for painting crosses on the patient's chest. Also, women made necklaces using beads formed from the blue clay.

FIG. 4. Painting the face with the finished pigment.